

U.S. Small Business Administration's Business Information Centers

What Are They and Where Are They?

The U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Business Information Centers (BICs) provide a one-stop location where current and future small business owners can receive assistance and advice. BICs combine the latest computer technology, hardware and software, an extensive small business reference library of hard copy books and publications and current management video tapes to help entrepreneurs plan their business, expand an existing business or venture into new business areas. The use of software for a variety of business applications offers clients of all types a means for addressing diverse needs.

In addition to the self-help hardware, software and reference materials, BICs have on-site counseling provided by the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). These former business men and women lend their expertise and knowledge to assist clients with problems and issues confronting those starting, managing and growing a small business.

Counseling provides the one-on-one interaction which leads the small business owners to develop personalized plans of action leading to the right choices for their businesses. Some BICs also have established linkages with Small Business Development Centers and together they offer not only general, but specialized, counseling and training.

Individuals who are in business or are interested in starting a business can use the BIC as often as they wish at no charge. For the prospective business owner, visits to the BIC may be frequent, as they do the basic research necessary to reach the decision to start their business. Existing business owners may use the BIC less frequently, but will find many resources aimed at business growth.

Each BIC adds new materials and resources throughout the year as they become aware of special needs in their small business community. The BICs are also used to inform the public about new initiatives and programs offered by the SBA and to reach business owners who might not otherwise take advantage of SBA's programs and services. Every BIC has access to SBA Online, the agency's national electronic bulletin board and most have access to the Internet.

As of February 2003, more than 80 BICs are operating in Jonesboro and Pine Bluff AR; Los Angeles, San Diego, Chula Vista, San Francisco and San Jose CA; Denver CO; Hartford CT; Wilmington DE; Washington DC; Jacksonville FL; Atlanta GA; Honolulu, HI; Boise ID; Chicago IL; Indianapolis IN; Keokuk and Waterloo, IA; Louisville KY; Lewiston, Portland and Springvale ME; Baltimore and Cumberland, MD; Orono, Cape Cod, Lawrence, Lynn, Pittsfield, Worcester, Brockton, West Barnstable and Lawrence MA; Flint and Grand Rapids MI; Minneapolis MN; Kansas City MO; Helena, Billings and Bozeman MT; Omaha NE; Las Vegas NV; Nashua, Keene, Bethlehem, Laconia, Springvale and Conway NH; Newark and Camden NJ; Albuquerque NM; Albany NY; Grand Forks and Minot ND; Cleveland OH; Oklahoma City OK; Warm

Springs, Grand Ronde, Chiloquin and Portland OR; Pittsburgh PA; Santurce PR; Providence RI; Charleston SC; Rapid City, Sioux Falls and Yankton SD; Nashville, Memphis and Jackson TN; El Paso, Ft. Worth and Houston TX; Salt Lake City and Ogden UT; Burlington VT; Manassas and Richmond VA; Seattle, Spokane, Richland, Auburn and Mt. Vernon WA; Fairmont WV; Casper WY.

To determine if a BIC will be opening in your area, call your local SBA district office or the Office of Business and Community Initiatives at (202) 205-6665.

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